

Curator's Column

Steph Mastoris
CURATOR



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1993 and 1994 have been good years for the statistics of The Harborough Museum. By the end of 1993 we had welcomed our largest annual number of visitors since the Museum was first opened in 1983 (over 14,000), and a few days before our 11th birthday (on 28th June 1994) staff greeted the 150,000th visitor.

Both of these statistics represent no mean feat for a small branch museum, somewhat tucked out of public sight on the first floor of the Council offices, and we are justly proud of them. We know from our earlier market research that over half our visitors are from the local community who come to us for a variety of reasons - everything from a school project to wanting to clear out the effects of a recently-deceased relative. However, over the past year we have been asking our visitors to fill in a more detailed questionnaire about their likes and dislikes of both the museum and its temporary exhibitions. The results are intriguing and bear testimony to the hard work of all our staff (both paid and volunteer) and the many others who act as our supporters.

Almost every visitor who completed the questionnaire commented on the friendly atmosphere and high quality of finish for the displays, often exclaiming with great surprise how clean and



H J SMITH'S OFFICES
ON FERNIE ROAD,
MARKET HARBOROUGH.
PHOTOGRAPH BY
GRAHAM STRETTON

tidy we are! Our highest scoring attractions are the puzzle case donated by H J Smith (Builders) Ltd. and Design & Co. for our tenth anniversary last year and the section dealing with local trades and industry. In addition the considerable proportion of items that can be touched, as well as the 'hands-on' activities for children, were also highly regarded. The old chestnuts of poor sign posting in the rest of the town to get people to the Museum and the quantities of steps and doors to get through to finally reach us in the building featured as the main disappointments for our visitors obviously things which are a little beyond our control, but which we hope that both the District and County Councils will remedy in time.

We will certainly be continuing with this monitoring of our visitors' opinions as it provides very valuable feedback on not just the quantity of our performance but also the quality of it. This no time to rest on our laurels as we are still under-used by our local schools and hear of many Harborians who have never set foot inside the Museum. Many of our collections need bringing up-to-date but there is only a little more room in the Stores.



SUSAN AND GRAHAM STRETTON
OF DESIGN & CO. WITH THE
PUZZLE SHOWCASE
JUNE 1993.
PHOTOGRAPH BY
ANDREW CARPENTER

Finally, the whole future of the Leicestershire Museum, Arts & Record Service still hangs in the balance as the proposed reorganisation of local government is still (June 1994) undecided. Whatever the outcome we must ensure the maintenance of the uniquely integrated service for museums, arts provision archaeological excavation, archive and ecological monitoring, of which the Harborough Museum is a small but justly famous part.